



GRAND MAGISTERIUM – VATICAN
EQUESTRIAN ORDER OF
THE HOLY SEPULCHRE OF JERUSALEM

At the service of the living stones in the Holy Land

The meaning of pilgrimage to the Holy Land for members of the Order



Pilgrimage to the Holy Land by the Lieutenancy for Switzerland and Liechtenstein, in May 2023.

Donata Maria Krethlow-Benziger, Lieutenant for Switzerland and Liechtenstein, reflects on the importance of visiting the Mother Church of the Holy Land, based on her experience in 2023. This article illustrates what Knights and Dames all over the world experience during pilgrimages organized by the Order.

Pilgrimage to Jerusalem has been a lofty ideal for Christians throughout the centuries. The longing for the heavenly Jerusalem was omnipresent.

Through today's pilgrimages to the Holy Land, in addition to visiting the Holy Places, we can see with our own eyes the situation of Christians still living there. This is a powerful sign, an expression of the close bond between us, the Knights and Dames of our Order, and the local Christian population. It is also a testimony of our love for the land where our Lord Jesus Christ lived.

The local people experience a different reality than we do here in Europe. They experience violence and injustice in many contexts. What great happiness and immense joy was granted to me when I was able to go on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in May 2023 together with more than 70 people from the Lieutenancy. The warm welcome at the Latin Patriarchate with the presentation of the pilgrim's shell was the highlight of the trip for me. It was an honor that the Patriarch, His Beatitude Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, had welcomed us to Jerusalem and personally conferred the pilgrim's shell to each Knight and Dame visiting the Holy Land for the first time as a Member of the Order. Following this, as Knights and Dames, we had been able to experience the solemn entrance into the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

Learning of the events that have shaken the Holy Land since October 7, 2023, has been shocking. Since then, the terrible news from the Middle East has added another chapter of suffering to the history of the Holy Land. Our thoughts and prayers go out to all those affected by this tragedy. Our commitment to the projects, our attachment and our closeness to the Christian people in the Holy Land remains undiminished, even though we will not be able to go there in the near future. We must not lose hope and we must not leave our brothers and sisters in the faith in the Middle East alone.

As Dames and Knights of our Order, we are part of the Mother Church of the Holy Land. We must fill the streets and holy places with our presence and prayers. And we will return as soon as political conditions allow again. Because the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem is not just any church, it is the place where our Lord Jesus Christ suffered, died and rose again. And from this Church the light shines into the world through the resurrection of Christ.

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